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Market to open next week at new site in Auburn’s Ag Heritage Park

The Market at Ag Heritage Park will kick off its sixth season from a new site at 3 p.m. on May 21. The farmers’ market will be available every Thursday, from 3 p.m.-6 p.m. through Aug. 27, providing Auburn residents the opportunity to buy locally grown, fresh-from-the-farm produce and other local products.

But this year, the open-air, growers-only farmers’ market won’t be at its traditional site on Samford Avenue across from the Athletic Complex. The 2009 market will be on the other side of Ag Heritage Park’s pond, on the green space near the Alfa Farmers Pavilion on Donahue Drive.

Robert Hensarling, Ag Heritage Park director, said the slight change of venue will help prevent problems associated with summer construction projects on Samford Avenue and make the market more accessible to customers.

“This site, located on Donahue between Samford Avenue and Lem Morrison Drive, offers shade trees, grass and better parking and traffic flow opportunities,” he said. “It also makes the pavilion accessible in case of inclement weather.”

As in its first five seasons, this year’s market will feature a variety of fruits and vegetables that will change as the summer season progresses, said market manager Dani Carroll.

“And every week, you’ll find honey, goat cheese, stone-ground grains, baked goods, Alabama-roasted coffee and a wide variety of plants, too,” Carroll said. She said the market’s organizers also plan to bring in educational displays and demonstrations, live music and special activities.

The Market is hosted by Auburn’s College of Agriculture and co-sponsored by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. For more information, contact Carroll at 749-3353 or carrolld@auburn.edu, or visit ag.auburn.edu/themarket online.

— Jamie Creamer

For guiding students

Faculty members, son establish award honoring mentors

Two Auburn faculty members and their son, a successful software developer, have endowed an award to recognize engineering faculty who distinguish themselves as mentors to their students.

Thaddeus A. Roppel, an associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, was honored as the first recipient of the Mark A. Spencer Creative Mentorship Award at the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s spring awards ceremony.

The new award was created by Auburn faculty members William and Samia Spencer and their son Mark, a 32-year-old communications software pioneer, in recognition of the valuable role that mentors played in Mark’s engineering education at Auburn. Bill Spencer is the former head of the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology in the College of Education. Samia Spencer is Alumni Professor of French in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures in the College of Liberal Arts.

The award is designed to recognize and encourage mentorship by engineering faculty members as a critical component of teaching. It carries a $10,000 stipend, to be divided between selected faculty members and their mentored students.

“Faculty mentors give students an avenue to further develop their interests and talents,” said Engineering Dean Larry Benefield. “This award recognizes those who look beyond the classroom for opportunities to teach and nurture their students.”

“We believe that it is important for the university to applaud good mentoring and those faculty members who recognize the potential of students,” said Samia Spencer. “Mark was a good student, but it was the extra effort put in by Dr. Roppel that really allowed Mark to grow in his interest and skill.”

See Mentoring award, page 2
Speakers to discuss crucial role of Creek War in early history of Alabama, nation

The Creek War and the War of 1812 will be the subject of a two-day public symposium May 22-23 at Auburn’s Julie Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. Scholars from around the country will discuss how these events changed the course of Alabama and American history.

In the early 19th century, Creek Indian territory covered much of present-day Alabama. Their defeat by forces led by Andrew Jackson opened Alabama and Mississippi for the rapid westward expansion of land-hungry settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas.

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, 30 miles from Auburn, is one of four War of 1812 parks in the National Park System. It is the site of the decisive 1814 battle in which General Andrew Jackson led an army of 3,300 to defeat 1,000 Upper Creek warriors. As a result of the battle, the Creeks were forced to cede 20 million acres of land to the United States.

“The gathering will celebrate the upcoming 50th anniversary of the establishment of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park in Daviston and launch the commemoration of this seminal conflict, and also will examine new research on the Creek War and the War of 1812,” said Kathryn Braund, an expert on Creek Indian history in Auburn’s Department of History.

Sponsors include the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts and Horseshoe Bend National Military Park and is funded in part by the National Park Service.

Speakers will represent Western Carolina University, the University of Michigan, U.S. Air Force Academy, Creek Council House Museum, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Fort Toulouse and Fort Jackson, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, independent scholars, Auburn University, Auburn Montgomery and the University of South Alabama.

Registration for the conference is $25 for one day, $40 for both days and includes lunch and refreshments. For a list of presenters, the schedule and registration form, go to www.auburn.edu/creekwar or call 844-4948.

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The Auburn Report is delivered to campus mailboxes every two weeks, except for certain holidays and extended breaks between semesters. To expedite delivery, individual address labels are no longer applied for persons on campus. Instead, the University Mail Service delivers quantities to each department on the basis of the number of faculty and staff in that unit.

As with all large mailings on behalf of the university, we depend on departmental office staff to place a copy in each person’s mailbox and on mailrooms in larger units to route the correct number of copies to each unit they serve.

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Honors for mentoring

Faculty members Samia and Bill Spencer joined their son, Mark, in establishing an award in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering to recognize faculty who devote extra effort to mentoring students. The first award went to Thaddeus Roppel.

Pictured from left are Samia Spencer, Mark Spencer, Roppel and Bill Spencer.

Mentoring award

continued from page 1

Mark Spencer, who graduated in computer engineering from Auburn in 2000, began his work with Roppel while developing a science project in high school. As his interests grew, he went on to major in computer science and software engineering at Auburn.

A pioneer of open source technology, Spencer invented Asterisk, a free software program that establishes phone calls over the Internet and handles voicemail, caller ID, teleconferencing and other features for the phone. The software forms the basis for a new generation of Internet-based voice communications technology. He is the founder, chairman and chief technology officer of Huntsville-based Digium Inc., a company specializing in the development of private branch exchange (PBX) software and open source telephone software.

— Sara Borchik and Ray Summerford

Athletics funds new professorship in memory of Coach Shug Jordan

The Auburn Athletic Department and Tigers Unlimited have announced the endowment of the Ralph “Shug” Jordan Professorship in memory and honor of the former Auburn coach.

During the recent A-Day festivities, Athletics Director Jay Jacobs made a special presentation to Ralph Jordan Jr. and Provost Mary Ellen Maze, who will award the professorship to a deserving faculty member.

Jacobs said the professorship was established to support the academic mission of the university and President Jay Gogue’s initiative to increase professorships on campus.

“We are committed to supporting the academic mission of Auburn University not only for our student-athletes, but for the campus as a whole,” Jacobs said.

“There is no better way for us to do that than to endow a professorship in honor and memory of Coach Shug Jordan, the most successful coach in Auburn history and one of the finest gentlemen to ever serve the university.”

A native of Selma, Jordan lettered in three sports at Auburn in the early 1930s. After graduating, he remained at Auburn as an assistant coach until leaving for military service in World War II.

Later, Jordan coached Auburn football from 1951-1975, becoming the all-time winningest coach in school history with 176 victories, including the 1957 Associated Press National Championship team.

After his retirement in 1975, Jordan served on the Auburn University Board of Trustees.

— Jack Smith
Saturday Art Club
Museum offers Saturday art adventures for kids this summer

Metalwork, print making and sculpture are just some of the variety of art topics and techniques students ages 6 to 18 can explore throughout the summer as Auburn’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts presents the Saturday Art Club.

The club, which is free, is popular with children of faculty and staff as well as others in the community. Starting this Saturday, May 16, the club meets every Saturday at 10 a.m. through Aug. 29, except July 4. Participants may stay as long as they like until 1 p.m.

During the sessions, museum educators will work with students in an open-studio environment to help them learn about everything from shape composition and building up an image using shapes, to bookmaking, journal building and paper making. Each day will have a general project idea but students will be encouraged to actively approach the techniques and concepts from their own points of view, said Andrew Henley, the museum’s education curator for K-12 students.

He added that students will be experimenting with different materials and subjects with the guidance of art educators, which, he said, should lead to creative results.

Henley said there will be age-appropriate activities based on the general theme at each session. Tables for younger children will include a reading or a book to tie in the theme. Children will also be exposed to art-related vocabulary such as color, line and shape and will get the opportunity to use authentic materials such as oil pastels, silverpoint and colored pencils throughout the sessions.

Opportunities will also be available to help parents learn how to talk about and teach art to their children. “I hope that the sessions serve as a good conversation starter,” Henley said.

While the benefits of learning about art are significant for all ages, Henley said younger age groups can particularly benefit. “Art is something that is done by absolutely everybody,” he said. “But especially for children under 12, it is innate as they are still experimenting and exploring the world around them.”

Participation in events such as the Saturday Art Club provides invaluable exposure to different types of art for children, Henley said, adding that such events can teach that art can be an outlet. “Art gives a child another means of expression.”

The Saturday Art Club also serves as another way to introduce small children to museums and the idea of what a museum is. “It helps illustrate that museums are not intimidatory and shows kids that the museum is not a formal, somber place,” he said. “They learn that it is actually okay to talk at a museum instead of being quiet. And that it is okay to talk about what each piece of artwork is trying to convey.”

A wide variety of topics will be covered throughout the summer. They include metalwork, including embossing and pewter casting; landscape drawing and painting, with invented places and the museum grounds; drawing, exploring various media and techniques; collages, mixed media and juxtapositions; shape composition, building up an image using shapes; patterns and decorative motifs; printmaking, wood and linocuts, Styrofoam prints for the younger students; more drawing techniques; weaving, with yarn, found materials and other media; sculpture, with stone carving and clay modeling; furniture design, ergonomics and decorative approaches; drawing spaces, linear perspective, interior and exterior places; advanced materials and drawing with odd things; bookmaking, journal building and paper making; and mosaics, in small and large scale with found object inclusions.

— Katie Wilder

Research discovery increases odds for tailor-made treatments for cancer

Auburn researchers Mark Byrne and Jacek Wower have developed a way to provide more control over the release of drugs into the body and, as a result, reduce the frequency of doses and side effects from multiple medications.

Their work involves harnessing the power of nucleic acids to control the rate, release amount and delivery location of medications throughout the body.

“We anticipate tremendous benefits to the treatment of various cancers and viral infections,” said Wower. “There is a need to create tailor-made treatments for these kinds of diseases because one person may respond differently to a medication than another. Medicine of the future will take into account a unique genetic blueprint of every patient, increased risks for certain illnesses and how patients respond to disease and therapy.”

Byrne and Wower, along with doctoral student Siddarth Venkatesh, used tiny RNA molecules called aptamers to control the release of drugs. For each patient, the drug delivery can be set to occur at various rates or under certain conditions, including exposure to an enzyme or reaching a specific temperature. Unlike past studies, this technology is capable of delivering doses of multiple drugs at different rates or a single drug at controllable and extended rates from one medical device.

“A nucleic acids work well for controlled drug delivery because they can easily be programmed to bind therapeutics, metals, other nucleic acids and proteins,” said Byrne. “Based on the patient’s needs, the strength of the binding can cause drugs to release at varying rates and amounts over a certain time and can be controlled in a variety of ways.”

The research team, which now includes doctoral student Padma Sundaram, is also using gold nanoparticles for targeting specific cells to deliver injectable drugs. The gold nanoparticles are biodegradable or excretable and can be injected directly into the bloodstream along with the medication. The combination could prove to be an important step for providing multiple-drug releasing carriers capable of delivering the right amount of medication at the right time.

Wower, a professor in Auburn’s Department of Animal Sciences, is a biochemist who studies the structure and function of RNA molecules. Byrne, whose expertise is biomedical engineering, biomaterials, biomedical devices and drug delivery, is the Sanders Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering at Auburn.

The Auburn researchers recently presented their findings at the annual American Institute of Chemical Engineers meeting in Philadelphia.

— Sally Credille

Campus Calendar
THURSDAY, MAY 21
C L A S S E S B E G I N First day of summer term
F A M I L Y F U N D A Y Annual festival for Auburn employees, 2:45 p.m.-5:30 p.m., lawn of President’s Home

FR ID AY, MAY 22
P U B L I C LECT U R E “The Role of the Coastal Zone in Global Change Research,” Wei-Jun Cai, Department of Marine Sciences, the University of Georgia, part of the Weaver Lecture Series, 11 a.m., Conference Hall, Forestry and Wildlife Science Building

M O ND A Y, MAY 25
H O L ID A Y No classes, offices closed for Memorial Day

F R ID AY, MAY 29
N E X T Auburn Report
Campus News Briefs

Choir students to sing at Carnegie Hall
Students from university choirs at Auburn will perform at New York’s Carnegie Hall on June 14.
The Auburn group will perform in a collaborative concert with several other college, high school and church choirs from around the country. The singers will be accompanied by a resident orchestra in the 40-minute concert, which will include two works by Franz J. Haydn. They will be conducted by AU music professor, William Powell, who also serves as director of choral activities. Greg Zielke of Grace University will also conduct during the concert.

College launches Maymester Abroad
Maymester Abroad, a new College of Agriculture study-abroad program in which faculty in the college teach their customary courses to Auburn students in classrooms around the world, debuts this month.
Agronomy and Soils Professor David Weaver and six College of Ag graduate students are traveling to China’s Northwest Agriculture and Forest University for an intense four-week version of Weaver’s semester-long plant genetics and crop improvement course. The six graduate students include Nick Sokora in plant pathology and C.J. McGrath in horticulture, both of whom have taken the course and will serve as graduate teaching assistants. The other graduate students are Mike Mulvaney in agronomy, Emily Stutzman in rural sociology, Li Lian Wong in fisheries and Warner Orozco-Obando in horticulture, who are taking the course for credit toward their degrees.
Enrollment in Weaver’s class was also open to students at the host university in China, and approximately 200 had registered for it. Maymester 2009 will mark Auburn University’s first-ever study-abroad venture to China.

Allen named head of veterinary hospital
The College of Veterinary Medicine has named Douglas Allen director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.
Allen, who succeeds John Saidla, began his duties in April. He is an international authority on equine surgery who previously served as director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital at the University of Georgia. He is a former president of the American Association of Veterinary Clinicians and has received awards from veterinary students for his clinical teaching.
A graduate of Auburn’s College of Veterinary Medicine, Allen is a diplomate in the American College of Veterinary Surgeons.